WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY · Founded December 17, 1857 MARCH 1980

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Chelsea Historical Society—7:30 p.m. second Monday of month at McKune Memorial Library.

Dexter Historical Society—Regular meeting, 8 p.m. Thursday, April 3, at museum, 3443 Inverness Street. After winter closing, the museum will reopen Tuesday, April 1, from 1-3 p.m. and will be open those hours every Tuesday and the second and fourth Saturdays each month through December. Alicia Pratt will furnish a special display of carved waterfowl April through June.

A house tour is set Friday, May 16. Plans are being drawn for new kitchen facilities at the museum to be paid for with funds raised by the Heritage Guild, and in the basement the old Dexter Leader presses and other printing equipment are being cleaned up for display. The society hopes eventually to have the small press in working order and print its letterhead stationery on it.

The society has a novel membership gimmick. They were given a number of sterling silver coins from the Dexter sesquicentennial. They are for sale for $25 each, less than the current market value of the silver but buyers must join the society for two years to purchase one. Judge Dexter's likeness is on one side, an oak tree on the other.

Milan Historical Society—7:30 p.m. third Wednesday of month at Hack house.

Saline Historical Society—8 p.m. third Tuesday at Saline High School library. A panel of local farmers were to discuss the changing role of farming in the community in March. The April program will be on landscaping of older homes.

Ypsilanti Historical Society—Older children and adults can test their skills at decorating eggs Ukrainian style from 2-4 p.m. Sunday, March 30, at the museum. Jane Salcau will demonstrate and instruct.

Judge Ross W. Campbell will show slides of early Ypsilanti scenes at 3 p.m. Sunday, April 20, at the Ladies Literary Club House, 218 N. Huron Street. His family settled in Washtenaw County in 1826.

FLORENCE HAAS DONATES TURN-OF-CENTURY BOOKS

Twelve little books, including Ann Arbor High School catalogues and literary magazines and others used in Washtenaw rural schools around the turn of the century have been presented to WCHS by Miss Florence Haas of Ann Arbor.

The books belonged to her mother, Emilie Graf, who married Edwin J. Haas. After high school graduation, she passed the teacher's examination and taught in several rural schools including Wagner, Kress (later Lodi Center) and Jedele.

The high school catalogues for 1894-97 and 1902-03 list courses and students. Tuition for non-resident pupils "without extras" was $9. There are three copies of *The Breeze,* high school literary magazine. Other volumes are of dialogues and plays used for Christmas programs plus "A Little French for a Little Girl" and "Sweetness and Light" by Matthew Arnold.

'GENETICS & GENEALOGY' GSWC TOPIC MARCH 24

Mrs. Justin L. (Charlotte) Giltner of the Detroit Genealogy Society will speak on "Genetics and Genealogy" at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, March 23, at Washtenaw Community College. Beginner's class at 1 p.m., also a help session.

'YES, HENRY, SOMETIMES HISTORY IS BUNK' IS DON PROCTOR'S TOPIC

Dr. Donald J. Proctor, professor of history at the U-M Dearborn campus, will speak at 8 p.m. Thursday, March 27, at the WCHS meeting at the Salvation Army, West Huron at Arbana.

Professor Proctor has done considerable research on the famous Henry Ford quotation. His topic in full is "Yes, Henry, Sometimes History is Bunk" or "History's Revenge—An Interval in the Life of Henry Ford, 1915-1919."

Recipient of a distinguished professor award two years ago, Professor Proctor, is currently on sabbatical, researching professional sports particularly the career of Ray Fisher.

He received his Ph.D. from the University of Southern California. His special area of research was the second Continental Congress. His publications include a definitive study on John Hancock. Born in England, he grew up in Providence, Rhode Island.

AUCTION RAISES $1,784 FOR WCHS MUSEUM FUND

The second annual benefit auction at the Home and Leisure Living Show Friday, March 14, raised $1,784 for the WCHS museum fund.

Many thanks are due to dozens of donors and bidders, show promoters John and Pat Danovich who originated the auction last year, and Auctioneers Lloyd Braun and Jerry Helmer who donated their services.

Auction workers included Hazel Proctor, chairman; Lois Foyle, co-chairman; Dr. John Dann, Ethelyn Morton, David Pollock, John Proctor, and Jewel Reynolds. Patricia Austin and Alice Ziegler solicited baked goods.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

U-M'S ANGELL NEGOTIATED CHINA TREATIES

This year—1980—marks the centennial of U-M President James B. Angell's important government mission to China but the local China connection goes back further to the first U-M graduating class of 1845.

American's interest in China usually focused on expanding commerce or "saving" their souls, according to Dr. Richard M. Doolen, assistant director of the Michigan Historical Collections at Bentley Library, who spoke at the February WCHS meeting.

Soul-saving was the motivation of Judson Collins of Lyndon township in Washtenaw County, one of the first twelve U-M alumni, who acted on a longtime desire and set out for China as a Methodist missionary two years after graduation.

Collins's diaries are the earliest documents in a large collection of papers relating to China at Bentley Library. Dr. Doolen also mentioned papers of U-M economist Henry Carter Adams, and Dr. Dennis Smith and his wife, Hazel Littlefield Smith, who went to China in the World War I era, and the Menzi family of Ypsilanti who were interned by the Japanese occupying China at the outbreak of World War II.

Sometimes the Chinese Collins encountered were curious about him and other times threatened him with violence. His diary entry for July, 1850, tells:

"I went this afternoon to the city . . . (There were) many processions in the street . . . A play was going on and a bad crowd gathered. I went along. They came around me . . . My cap was several times knocked off, and my hair pulled. I went up to my (speaking) station. Some were rude and I could not be heard much. I told them they were bad and they sneered at being called bad by a foreigner and said I had better go. I talked on some time. The (crowd) became tumultuous, pushing one way and another and I left. Was more rudely treated after, (my) cap knocked off several times. No serious hurt by the blessing of God. Should I leave the people then alone (?) I think not. There may be good done yet."

Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M

JAMES BURRILL ANGELL
U-M President, 1871-1909, led a diplomatic mission to China in 1880.

"Like other missionaries, Collins was frequently troubled in China by poor health. He came back to Michigan in 1851 and died six months later (May, 1852).

"James B. Angell, an extremely important figure in the history of the University, was also a leading figure in American higher education generally. Appointed U-M president in 1871, he held that post for nearly 40 years, retiring in 1909.

"President Rutherford B. Hayes selected Angell to head a three-man mission to Peking to negotiate on trade and immigration. Dr. Angell comments that he was chosen, at least in part, because of the high regard Chinese placed on men of formal educational attainment.

"Angell's family accompanied him. They included his wife, the formidable Sarah Caswell Angell (We could spend a whole evening on her. Her name is memorialized in the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.); his son, Robert, 11, later president of Yale University (1921-37); and daughter, Lois Thompson Angell, 17. Lois later married a distinguished professor of history, Andrew C. McLaughlin.

Diaries and letters of Angell, his wife and daughter are preserved at Bentley. Portions of his diary were published some years ago in *Michigan Quarterly Review.*

Dr. Angell's job was to negotiate a new treaty to drastically limit or end immigration of Chinese labor to the United States without alienating the Chinese government or leading China to limit activities of American missionaries and businessmen in China, he explained.

Fairly large numbers of Chinese had started coming to the US in the Civil War period and helped build the western railroads. By the late 1870's considerable antagonism had arisen from American labor and others." Even intellectuals were saying harsh things about orientals.

"Angell was a good man to choose because his sympathies were with the Chinese—he showed no sign of the blatant racism of other leaders—and he liked the American ideal of openness to all people. But he knew that he walked a tightrope.

"Why did he accept? We're not quite sure. Certainly he had a sense of service and a great interest in American foreign affairs. (He later served on other diplomatic assignments.) Both he and his wife thought this an opportunity to further the work of the church."

The Angell family sailed from San Francisco June 19, 1880, spent ten days in Japan and arrived in early August. They lived comfortably in the quarters of the former US minister to China in Peking.

"Treaty negotiations went very well. In a little over forty days they came up with two treaties. The first, on trade, among other things, mutually forbade bringing opium into either country. This was a particularly important accomplishment from Angell's standpoint. The second provided the US might "regulate, limit, suspend" but never "absolutely prohibit" immigration of Chinese laborers to the US.

"Angell thought this better than entirely prohibiting it but, in practice, Congress cut it off by continually 'suspending' it. Limited immigration didn't resume until 1943."

Angell and his family stayed on another year, he as US minister. He intervened at least once to protect an American missionary and his church threatened by a mob. Again, a rumor circulated in Washington that China was going to seize the Hawaiian Islands and the State Department told him to warn them the US would not permit it.

"Unfortunately, the Chinese hadn't heard the rumor. He had to explain what Hawaii was and the US fear. They broke up laughing and said, 'Never mind. We'll give the US plenty of warning whenever we attack Hawaii'."

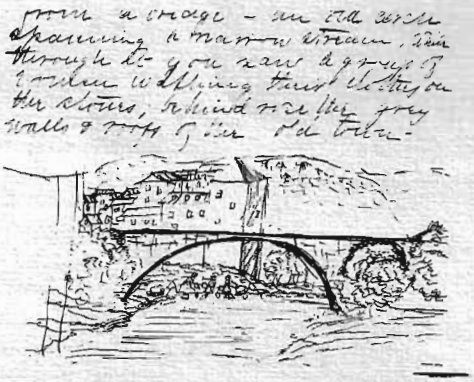
Angell tried to learn Chinese by taking lessons from his new friend, Sir Thomas Wade, the British minister.

Angell was a "friendly critic" of the Chinese, Dr. Doolen said, favorably impressed with several of the Chinese officials he encountered, but not impressed with the harsh system of justice and the educational system. He saw bamboo canings and use of something like Pilgrim stocks on certain offenders.

He thought the educational system focused too narrowly on language and the classics, too little on science and mathematics. He found the Chinese mind notably "unscientific" with too little interest in classifying or categorizing, something very important to Americans of 1880.

"When he met one Chinese official who impressed him, he described the man as one whose 'mind seemed . . . to work like the mind of a Western man—by logical processes.'

"A modern observer might find Angell's references to 'Chinamen' rather than 'Chinese' somewhat offensive or patronizing, but Angell did not mean it in a derogatory sense. We have to look at him in the light of his own times. Others



Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M

PEKING DIARY

Lois Angell, 17, sketched this Chinese scene in her diary 100 years ago. Beyond the arch women are washing clothes on stones beside the stream.

were commonly referred to as 'Irishmen' or 'Dutchmen'.

"The women did not have much contact with the Chinese. Their diaries are of women pursuing their customary occupations much as they would have in Ann Arbor—visiting other women in the western compound, leaving calling cards, attending parties in the evening. Mornings Lois took lessons in French and flower arranging.

"Their comments on China were frequently unfavorable. They didn't like the dirt, ruts and smells of the streets or the enormous contrasts between poverty and wealth. They might be walking down a dirty street and encounter a Manchu in richly brocaded robes in red and gold.

"Young Lois and a couple of male companions went out to a Chinese temple one day and bribed one of the priests to let them enter. She found the temple impressive in size but noted that it was depressing to see 'so beautiful a building all going to decay with the rafters crumbling, the paint cracking off and an air of moldy decay pervading the place'."

There were very few western girls in Peking so that each one was regarded as a "great beauty", Lois commented. At dances she might be outnumbered by males ten to one.

On the other hand, she declared that China was a "bad place to be the simple sincere, frank girl I want to be." There was so much "etiquette" to observe, she said, that one could hardly move "without infringing some 'unwritten law'."

By the early twentieth century a steady stream of Michigan men and women were making their way to China, Dr. Doolen continued. There was even the beginning of a countervaling movement. U-M Regent Levi Barbour (Barbour Gym, Betsy Barbour Hall) established the Barbour fellowships at the U-M for oriental women, intended as a counterpart to the Rhodes scholarships for men. Many Chinese U-M alumnae went back to their homeland to assume high positions in education, government, medicine or the church.

Last spring, the University's Athena alumnae award was presented to one of these women—Wuu Yi Feng, president of Ginling College in China.

A distinguished U-M economist, Henry Carter Adams, went to China (1913-17) with his wife and son, Tom, as an advisor to the first Republic of China in its attempts to create a more orderly transportation system. His special expertise was in railroad finance and accounting practices.

His papers at Bentley deal with the knotty problems of railroad bookkeeping and reveal pessimism about survival of the republic as well as his frustrations in working with the "Chinese puzzle." He said China was "a pot always boiling." He complained about Chinese inefficiency and corruption. He said the Chinese had raised Tammany Hall to its logical extreme.

In one letter, Adams noted that the chairman of the country's railroad commission had recently paid $18,000 to procure a new mistress. The $18,000, Adams noted, would come from forced contributions from the nation's railroad stationmasters.

But Adams was not always negative. He described the Chinese as a "wonderful sleeping people" and agreed that many of their problems were made by foreigners who had "sucked dry" or drained away

China's revenues.

He was successful in helping China apply better recordkeeping practices and thereby improving her international credit rating.

Following his death in 1922, China representatives placed a tablet on his grave in Forest Hill Cemetery, praising him for his services and thanking him for his understanding and sympathy for the people of China. Perhaps fortunately they had not read his letters and diaries to see his pessimism.

Bentley also has the papers and photographs of Dr. Dennis Smith, and his wife, Hazel Littlefield Smith, who were in China 1914-27. He was a U-M medical school graduate eye specialist on the staff of Methodist Hospital in Peking.

Mrs. Smith, a poet and essayist, "was and still is a bright and perceptive observer of Chinese society who can still do a kowtow flat on the floor at age 90," Dr. Doolen said.

In many ways the China of the World War I era seemed little different from China when the Angells saw it.

The Smith papers also contain the letters her father, Josiah Littlefield, wrote back to Newaygo county newspapers when he visited in China.

In many ways the China of the World War I era seemed little different from the China the Angells saw—drugs were still a problem, there were rival armies and violence, and the ever-present yellow dust.

Dr. Smith, writing in a 1917 letter wrote: ". . . we are having a hard March wind and when a gust of that comes, the air is simply filled with dust. When I got home this noon from attending church . . . it took me exactly fifteen minutes to wash my face, ears, and hands, to rinse the dust out of my eyes, to gargle it out of my throat and to snuff it out of my nose."

In 1917, he wrote that drugs were smuggled illegally from Britain into China by Japanese traders. Dr. Smith was also critical of a certain American from Milwaukee who was about to begin manufacture of beer in China (on the eve of American Prohibition).

Dr. Smith was a spectator at the Battle of Peking in the summer of 1917 between Republican troops and an army which hoped to restore the Manchu emperor. As he watched from the city wall, he fell into conversation with a group of Germans.

He writes: ". . . as I was talking with some German people I could not but think that while here we were spectators of a battle, over in Europe our countrymen were the participants in battles (against each other) many times worse than this."

Bentley also has papers of the Menzi family of Ypsilanti, missionaries, who were interned by the Japanese who were occupying China at the time of Pearl Harbor. Chinese Christians smuggled them things they would need in internment camp—dried fruits and seeds.

YOUR COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUPPORT SOUGHT

Washtenaw County Historical Society offers stimulating monthly programs September through May (this month: "Yes, Henry, Sometimes History Is Bunk"), the annual June tour, and Washtenaw Impressions to keep you informed as it works to preserve the county's heritage.

The society needs your support. Won't you send in your 1980 dues today to Membership Chairman Angela Dobson Welch, 2220 Glendaloch Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Regular dues are $5 per person, $9 per couple. For information about other types of memberships call Mrs. Welch at 662-8891.

APRIL TOPIC SET

What kind of a library did the first president of the U-M have in Michigan in 1817, before there was a Washtenaw County? Suzanne Steele, librarian at Bentley Library, will show and discuss it at the April 24 meeting.

HERE'S A FUN JOB

The Ann Arbor Historic District Commission is planning walking tours downtown for Preservation Week May 11-17 and needs volunteer tour guides. Anyone interested in being trained for this fun job please call 996-3008 Monday through Friday 9-5 for more details.

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WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

8:00 p.m. THURSDAY MARCH 27, 1980

SALVATION ARMY
West Huron at Arbana
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Ziegle
537 Riverview Drive
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104